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SUBJECT: AGOA FORUM UPDATE: GOK PRESENTS COUNTER THEME, REMAINS NON-COMMITTAL ON PROGRAMMING

REFS: (A) NAIROBI 325
(B) NAIROBI 372
(C) NAIROBI 421

1. This cable is not/not for internet distribution.

2. Summary. During the March 12 meeting of the AGOA Forum Preparatory Meeting, the Government of Kenya (GOK) presented the counter theme, "Realizing the full potential of AGOA through expansion of trade and investment," which it considers a compromise with the USG theme of "Advancing Development through Trade and Investment Expansion." Econ/C presented the USG interagency approved AGOA Forum program, confirmed the visit of the USG interagency visit the week of March 23-27, and reiterated the interagency position to retain the standing format of the AGOA Forum; the GOK remains noncommittal on programming. Econ/C stated that the upcoming interagency visit could propel the planning process forward, taking advantage of the opportunity to come to consensus on outstanding issues - such as programming, sequencing, and theme. The GOK seems prepared to negotiate these outstanding issues in good faith. End Summary.

GOK Presents a Counter Theme

3. At the March 12 meeting of the Government of Kenya's (GOK) 2009

AGOA Forum Preparatory Meeting, Lina Ochieng, Chair of the AGOA Forum Technical sub-committee, presented a counter to the USG-proposed AGOA Forum theme. The sub-committee believes the modified theme -- "Realizing the full potential of AGOA through expansion of trade and investment" -- is a "wake-up call to countries that are behind in taking full advantage of AGOA." Econ/C stated that we would forward the modified theme to the interagency team for consideration and hope to finalize it during the interagency delegation advance trip the week of March 23-27.

Forum Program and Sequencing

¶4. Econ/C presented the USG interagency approved AGOA Forum program. Ms. Ochieng stated that it appeared the USG had taken some of the GOK proposals into account when building their program. The full Committee agreed that the GOK will discuss the USG-provided program as well as solicit feedback from the other African AGOA-eligible countries so that it can provide a consensus view to the USG. Econ/C proposed that when the interagency advance team is here, the GOK and the USG walk through the program together and come to consensus on a final agenda for the Forum activities. (Note: The chair of the full Committee has since confirmed that the USG-proposed program has been vetted with the other AGOA-eligible African countries in preparation for the interagency team visit next week. End note.)

¶5. Regarding sequencing, Econ/C emphasized the interagency position to retain the standing format of the program and stressed the importance of holding the US-Africa Ministerial and private sector/civil society events on consecutive days so that principals -

particularly from the Department of Commerce - are able to attend both the Ministerial and some of the private sector/civil society activities. The Chair of the Technical Sub-Committee suggested keeping the standard sequencing and adding an "expert" pre-meeting on August 3 as well as integrating the private sector and civil society into parts of the ministerials. Econ/C reiterated that the best opportunity for reaching agreement on both programming and sequencing is during the upcoming visit of the interagency team.

GOK Continues to Make Progress

¶6. The Kenyan AGOA team continues to make progress on the Forum preparations. The following are highlights of the progress:

-- The Chair of the Technical Sub-Committee has drafted invitations to the forum for the trade ministers of AGOA-eligible countries and is waiting for the theme to be finalized before sending them.

-- The Publicity Sub-Committee announced that a contractor has begun work on supplementing the local AGOA forum web site - www.agoaforumkenya.go.ke - with registration capabilities and they should complete their work in three weeks. Econ/C asked the GOK to correct the dates of the Forum and ensure registration capabilities on the web site.

-- The Private Sector Sub-committee announced they have hired an exhibition organizer to plan a trade show as part of the Forum activities. All information, including applications and the trade show floor plan, will be available on the local AGOA web site.

¶6. At the meeting, Econ/C stressed that civil society was an important part of the process and introduced visiting USAID officer Jeff Malick. Malick stated that USAID funds the participation of civil society from AGOA-eligible African countries, but it does not fund any preparation activities of the Civil Society Sub-committee. He added that the Sullivan Foundation has been identified as the lead of the U.S. Civil Society umbrella organizations. The Sullivan Foundation could provide the Kenyan Civil Society Alliance with Africa-wide expertise and assist in making the civil society program broad-based.

¶7. Econ/C confirmed the visit of the USG interagency team the week of March 23-27, and pledged to set up small working meetings (in

addition to the next full committee meeting) to finalize the program, sequencing, and theme, among other details. He stated that the visit could propel the planning process forward, taking advantage of the opportunity to come to consensus on outstanding issues. Econ/C indicated that it is important to reduce expectations of US private sector participation in the AGOA Forum activities due to both the economic crisis and the October Corporate Council on Africa Business Summit. Econ/C said we would do our best to promote private sector participation. Econ/C reiterated the importance of the GOK coordinating the release of the joint press statement with the Embassy.

Ranneberger